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Social and Economic Survey of a Community in the Red River Valley (The University of Minnesota, *Current Problems*, no. 4). By LOUIS DWIGHT HARVELL WELD, PH.D., assistant professor of economics, chief of the division of research in agricultural economics. (Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota, 1915. vi, 86 p.)

Social and Economic Survey of a Community in Northeastern Minnesota (The University of Minnesota, *Current Problems*, no. 5). By GUSTAV P. WARBER, M.A., sometime assistant in agricultural economics in the University of Minnesota. (Minneapolis, The University of Minnesota, 1915. viii, 115 p.)

There has been much discussion in recent years, both in the magazines and newspapers, of the rural life problem. As a result of investigations carried on by agricultural colleges and the United States department of agriculture, and with the more extensive use of modern farm machinery, a great advance has been made during the last fifty years in agricultural methods. Along with this advance is coming the realization that there is an insistent need of bettering the social, economic, and educational conditions existing in rural communities. Recognizing that no constructive program of rural betterment can carry weight that is not based on an intimate knowledge of the present-day life of an average individual in a typical community, the division of research in agricultural economics of the University of Minnesota three years ago began a series of intensive studies of several rural communities typical of different sections of Minnesota. The same general plan of procedure has been followed in all the studies. Members of the staff of the division visited personally the farms and homes of the territory under investigation, and first-hand data as to the economic, social, educational, and religious activities of the people were obtained. From these field notes the statistical results have been worked out in the form of tables, diagrams, and textual comment. The first study by Mr. C. W. Thompson, published in 1913, is a survey of a farming community in southeastern Minnesota "representative of those regions where diversified farming and dairying have reached a fairly high state of development." Of the

two succeeding studies, the first, by Mr. Weld, is a survey of a community in the "large-farm, grain-growing section" of the state, in the Red River Valley; the second, by Mr. Warber, of a community in the cut-over section of eastern Minnesota, "where potato-growing and dairying are the principal sources of agricultural income, and where the farms are comparatively small." In these volumes both a farming and a village community are studied, not so much for the purpose of comparing conditions in the two groups as to show the economic dependence of the one on the other.

In the first chapter of his Red River Valley survey, Mr. Weld treats of general agricultural conditions. The leading facts brought out are the dependence of the farming population on the growing of grain crops, particularly of wheat, as a source of income; the impending exhaustion of the soil due to the reluctance of the farmers to introduce a system of crop rotation whereby the fertility of the soil is increased, but from which the immediate financial returns are less; and the increase in tenancy with the resulting lowering of standards of living and agricultural methods. The second chapter tells how the farming community lives. The large farms, separating their owners by long distances, the mingling of different nationalities and religions, the large number of rented farms, with tenants coming and going, the cold winters, the long hours of labor, and the scarcity of "hired help" are responsible for the noticeable lack of social intercourse among the farmers and of interest in economic, civic, and educational activities. The marketing of farm products is treated in chapter 3. The facilities open to the farmer for disposing of his commodities are adequate, but attention is called to the fact that higher prices might be obtained were the farmers better organized economically. Very few coöperative associations exist. In chapter 4 the stores and industries of the village are described, and the economic dependence of the village on the rural community immediately tributary to it is noted. In the last chapter we learn how the village people live; the various occupations of the heads of families, the comforts and conveniences found in the homes, the recreations and social organizations are described.

In the survey of Braham township in northeastern Minnesota Mr. Warber has grouped his material in accordance with the same general plan as was noted in Mr. Weld's study. However, the agricultural conditions met with in this community differ greatly from those in the Red River Valley. The community is located in the cut-over region where the land must be cleared of stumps before it can be used for agricultural purposes. As a result the farms are small, most of them being only slightly over one hundred acres in extent. They are best adapted for dairy farming; little attention is paid to the raising of small grains, and the potato crop is practically the only cash crop. Economic conditions are hard, for only by careful scientific management can these farms be made to pay a reasonable return for the labor and capital invested. The farmers of this community, however, have learned the value of coöperation, and coöperative associations of various kinds are noted. There is more social intercourse between families and between members of the farming community and the village. The statistics relating to the social, civic, educational, and religious activities are given in more detail than in Mr. Weld's study. Mr. Warber has added interest and vividness to his narrative by introducing comments of the persons interviewed, showing their own attitude toward the conditions and institutions in their midst.

These studies do not attempt to offer any definite schemes for improving the social and economic conditions obtaining in rural communities, but the series, when completed, will furnish comparative data collected from representative sections of the state which will be of invaluable assistance to those who to-day are trying to solve the rural problem. By a careful study of these data "certain fundamental facts will gradually unfold, with the result that sane and definite methods of procedure may be evolved." But it is not alone to the present-day economist or sociologist that these studies are valuable; of equal worth will they be to that scholar who at some future time is to write a history of the people of Minnesota, for he will rank them among the most important of his source material on the life of Minnesota's rural population in the opening decade of the twentieth century.

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